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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: BELGIAN SENATE APPROVES LISBON TREATY

1. (U) On March 6th the Belgian Senate voted to approve the Treaty of Lisbon, 48 to 9 in favor with 1 abstention. Although many senators expressed reservations about certain aspects of the treaty, only members of the right-wing, Flemish nationalist party, Vlaams Belang (VB), voted against the treaty.

2. (U) The Senate is the first of seven legislative bodies that must approve the treaty before it is ratified. The treaty will next go to the House of Representatives where, if passed, it will be sent to the five regional and community parliaments for their approval. All of the legislatures must vote up or down on the treaty as presented by the Foreign Minister. No amendments or additional reservations are permitted by the Belgian constitution. If all seven bodies approve the treaty, as is expected, the process will conclude when the King issues a pro forma decree affirming the ratification of the treaty. Outgoing Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt says he expects the treaty to be ratified before summer.

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